

Schools - Partridge Academy

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Long Ago Duxbury



Mrs. Mary A. Livemore, who spoke in 1895 at the 50th anniversary of Partridge Academy, taught a private school there before the academy was established. Talking about her school, which flourished in the 1840s, she says:

"In those days teachers were obliged to fall back on their own resources. There were no normal schools to train them for their work, no teachers' institutions, no educational journals, no graded schools; the text books were poorly adapted to their uses, and but little was done with the blackboard. If a teacher had a natural attitude for teaching, and then had trained himself, he would in some ways succeed in doing good work. He would so thoroughly master the subjects he was to teach as to supersede the text book and dispense with it, would be ingenious in devising ways of quickening his pupils and holding their attention--would keep in constant touch with them, and put much of himself into them, and in this way many a teacher of the olden time did better for his pupils than he ever knew."

She says that around 1845 Duxbury was an interesting town--"a famous ship-building town, although the people declared it was on the decline, and shook their heads sorrowfully, saying: 'Duxbury is not what it used to be.' There were, however, six ships on the stocks in the various shipyards the first year I went into the town, and others were projected for the near future."

She added that the launching of a ship broke up her school. "A favored few of my pupils would be sure to be invited on board during a launching, while others would be asked to take seats in front of the shipyard, where they could observe the passage of the vessel into the water, and the remainder would ask to be excused from school till the great event was over." She says she didn't mind giving a half holiday, "never sorry to witness the launching myself."